

Missouri Soil and Water Districts Commission

Plan for the Future 2005



Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Soil and Water Conservation Program

A Letter from the Director

I am pleased to introduce you to the Missouri Soil and Water Districts Commission's Plan for the Future. The 2005 edition of this plan was developed to define the commission's priorities and to help guide their decisions over the next 10 years. The commission adopted this plan in September of 2005.



The plan highlights the goals of conserving our soil resources for ourselves and for future generations and also conserving water resources with an emphasis on improving water quality. The plan provides for a number of implementation strategies to achieve these goals. It also expresses values held by the commission and stakeholders who participated in the planning process. These values include protecting our natural resources, meeting the needs of landowners and accountability.

The commission partnered with the University of

Missouri Extension Services to develop this long-range plan. Extension led numerous sessions with Missouri's soil and water conservation districts and stakeholders who provided valuable insight and input into the process.

The Department of Natural Resources works closely with the Soil and Water Districts Commission and Missouri's 114 soil and water conservation districts to administer programs that conserve our soil and water resources. Through these programs Missouri's erosion rates have been reduced more than any other state.

Join me in celebrating the success of Missouri's soil and water conservation programs and in working for a Missouri with healthy land and clean water for many generations to come.



Doyle Childers, Director
Missouri Department of Natural Resources

Planning Process Advisory Committee

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Missouri Department of Natural Resources photos

Executive Summary

The following values informed and guided the planning process:

- **Conservation of natural resources** This includes protecting land and water resources and passing these on to our children and grandchildren and to future generations.
- **Meeting the needs of landowners** We must help landowners balance financial realities with the need to protect productive working lands for future generations.
- **Accountability** We must be open and accountable to voters both fiscally and programmatically.

Terminology

Conservation – Maintaining soil and water resources so that the land continues to be productive for future generations and that the quality and quantity of water are maintained and not diminished or degraded. Sustainability (sustaining soil productivity and water quality) and stewardship are also terms used to express conservation values.

Cost-Share Program – Landowners and the commission share the cost of the conservation practice. Most Missouri cost-share practices require that landowners provide at least 25 percent of the cost of the practice.

Parks-and-Soils Sales Tax – This is a one-tenth-of-one-percent sales tax first approved in 1984 and renewed in 1988 and 1996. Half of this tax is used to support Missouri's state parks, and half is used to conserve Missouri's soil and water resources.

AgNPS SALT Project (Agricultural Nonpoint Source Special Area Land Treatment project) – These projects are locally led watershed-based projects awarded to districts on a competitive basis. Districts work with local landowners and others in the watershed to prevent and reduce erosion, nonpoint source pollution, and other water quality problems. The district identifies specific problems in the watershed and develops and implements plans to address those issues.

Goals and objectives

1) Conserve Missouri's soil resources.

Continue practices that prevent soil erosion improve soil and water quality; expand the commission's role in helping with long-term

soil and water conservation benefits; and work with others on strategies to conserve the productive power of Missouri's agricultural land.

2) Conserve Missouri's water resources and support clean water.

Continue to support locally led watershed-based programs; encourage high-quality projects with multiple stakeholders; and work with others to determine and implement long-term strategies to conserve Missouri's agricultural land in a way that is protective of Missouri's water resources.

Implement the 2005 Plan for the Future

Program delivery through effective and efficient soil and water conservation districts:

Provide opportunities for districts to improve their capacity to provide services and encourage effective district leadership. Assist districts in identifying and obtaining alternative funding sources.

Education and outreach: Improve education and outreach opportunities regarding soil and water conservation.

Decision making based on sound science:

Develop programs to conserve Missouri's soil and water resources based on sound scientific criteria and data. Provide information to landowners, districts, and others. Use accepted and appropriate technical standards for planning, implementing and reviewing conservation practices and activities.

Changing land use and land stewardship:

Work to better understand land use changes in Missouri, their effect on soil and water conservation and the implications for long-term sustainability of Missouri's natural resources.

Organizational capacity building: Improve the capacity to deliver soil and water conservation pro-



grams and practices by constantly improving processes, technology and staff capabilities to deliver services to districts, landowners and the public.

Fiscal accountability and information management: Be accountable in implementing soil and water conservation programs in Missouri.

Who's Who

The Soil and Water Districts Commission administers soil and water conservation programs in Missouri. Its six voting members are farmers appointed by the governor. The four ex officio, non-voting members represent the Departments of Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources as well as the University of Missouri. The commission's duties include establishing priorities, developing budgets, planning, and hearing landowners' appeals related to soil and water conservation.

There are 114 soil and water conservation districts in Missouri. Each district has a locally elected board. The local boards hire staff, develop local priorities and administer soil and water conservation programs in their area.

The staff for the Soil and Water Districts Commission is in the Soil and Water Conservation Program, which is part of the Department of Natural Resources. The program staff provides support for the commission, assists the districts and administers the commission's programs.

Introduction, background and values

The Soil and Water Districts Commission sets policy for soil and water conservation programs in Missouri. There are six farmer members on the commission and four nonvoting ex officio members representing the Departments of Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Conservation and a member from University of Missouri Extension.

There are 114 locally elected soil and water conservation district boards (one for each county). These boards hire and manage a district staff, which works with local landowners to put conservation on the ground. District staff members also provide information and educational services to their communities.

The Soil and Water Conservation Program of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources assists the local districts in carrying out their responsibilities, supports the commission and administers programs such as watershed projects, state cost-share, planning,

oversight and soil science.

The Soil and Water Districts Commission, assisted by the University of Missouri Extension, began a comprehensive planning process to update its Plan for the Future in 2003.

This planning process resulted in a large number and a wide variety of suggestions and ideas, not all of which can be presented here. Appendix A, however, includes a summary of information collected from the meetings and from other opportunities that were made available to provide input.



The planning sessions and discussions brought to light several values and goals and a number of suggestions about ways to implement programs to meet the challenges that lie ahead. The pages of a planning document cannot do justice to the complicated issues involved and how they are interrelated. The components of this plan are, like the environment, interrelated and interdependent. Meeting the goals of soil and water conservation will require good implementation tools, including strong districts, good information, sound science, outreach tools, responsive policymaking and a high level of accountability.

The Plan for the Future is an expression of the following values:

Conservation of natural resources

Soil and water conservation is important for maintaining productive working lands into the future. For many people this includes a family value of passing on well-tended land to their children and grandchildren and to future generations. For others it represents a value held as a responsible member of the community. Perhaps the term "land stewardship" best describes this value of conserving natural resources for current and future generations.



be constantly improved upon. The public must be able to see and understand what the program is doing — and to have a say in whether to continue funding soil and water conservation through the dedicated parks-and-soils sales tax.

These values, shared by participants in the planning process from throughout the state, guided the commission in its further development of the Plan for the Future and should be reflected in its implementation.

Goals and Objectives

The primary goals developed through the planning process are (1) soil conservation and (2) water conservation, with an emphasis on water quality.

Meeting the needs of landowners

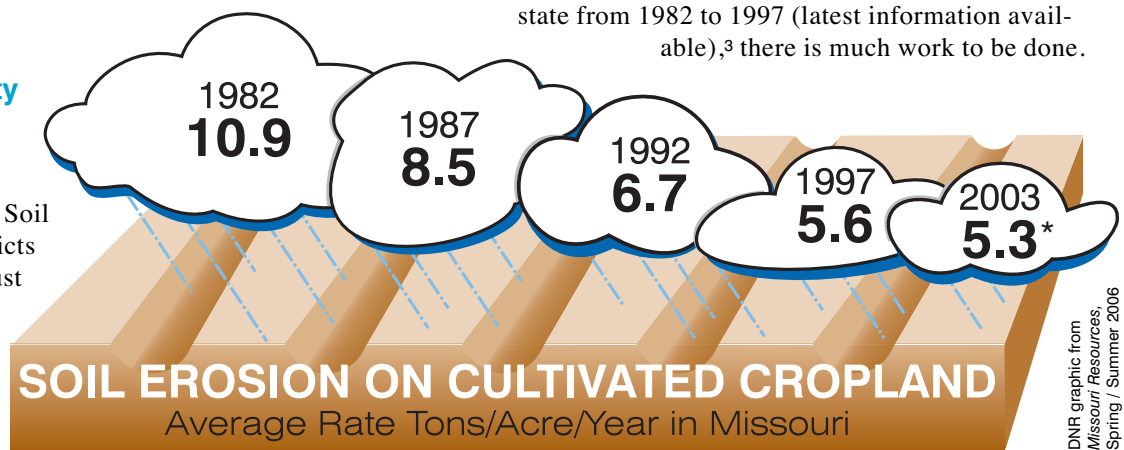
To be effective, the Soil and Water Districts Commission must meet the needs of the landowners as landowners work to balance the financial realities of owning and managing land with the value they place on protecting that land for current and future generations. The needs of landowners are as different and varied as are the landowners themselves. A program of information, education, financial incentives, technical assistance and a diverse variety of practices is necessary to meet the needs of landowners and the land. Cooperation and partnership with other agencies and organizations are also essential to provide the appropriate resources to the landowner

1. Soil conservation

Missouri loses 40 million tons of soil annually from cultivated cropland, and more than 70 million tons total.¹ This total represents enough soil to cover four lanes of Interstate 70 from Kansas City to St. Louis with 20 feet of soil. Soil eroding from Missouri's fields represents a significant sediment load in streams and lakes and the loss of a significant natural resource. The lost soil also carries nutrients, pesticides and other chemicals with it, causing impairment to many streams and lakes in Missouri.² Although Missouri reduced erosion on cultivated cropland more than any other state from 1982 to 1997 (latest information available),³ there is much work to be done.

Accountability

To be accountable, the programs of the Soil and Water Districts Commission must be open to discussion, must be tested, must be audited and must



*Pre-release estimates based upon the 2003 National Resources Inventory. These estimates are subject to change.

¹ Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), 2002 preliminary unpublished data.

² Missouri Department of Natural Resources, 2002 Water Quality Report, http://www.dnr.mo.gov/env/wpp/waterquality/2002_305b.pdf.

³ NRCS, 1997 National Resources Inventory, released 1999.

Thirty-six percent (3.7 million acres)⁴ of Missouri's cultivated cropland is still eroding above tolerable "T" levels.⁵

Soil conservation goal: Conserve the productive power of Missouri's agricultural land for current and future generations by preventing and reducing soil erosion.

Soil Conservation Objective 1: Maintain a statewide Cost-Share Program that addresses soil conservation issues associated with maintaining the agricultural productivity of working agricultural lands.

Soil Conservation Objective 2: Establish needed soil conservation programs that assist the soil and water conservation districts in the protection of Missouri soils from erosion through sound planning, maintaining soil conservation practices, updating existing practices as required for soil conservation, and maintaining a diversity of approved cost-share practices. Help districts develop additional funding sources to address nonagricultural erosion issues.



Soil Conservation Objective 3: Continue to serve the soil and water conservation districts' needs while adhering to state statutes relative to conserving soil resources. Provide for training, technical assistance and information as required, while maintaining financial accountability.

2. Water conservation and clean water

Agriculture is the leading source of nonpoint source pollution in Missouri. It's the commission's responsibility to assure taxpayers that, by continuing soil and water conservation programs, the purity of the water in their streams will be protected.⁶

The number one pollutant, by a wide margin, entering Missouri's waters is sediment (soil).⁷ As soil is washed from the land, it takes with it other pollutants, such as pesticides, fertilizers and other chemicals. Water washing over the land or through the soil can also carry dissolved chemicals. By keeping soil and water that contain chemicals from entering Missouri's streams, rivers, lakes and water supply reservoirs, we can protect the quality of Missouri's water.

Agriculture is a source of impairment for more than 7,700 stream miles in Missouri and 45,000 lake acres.⁸ Soil and water conservation practices can be used to address this issue in a positive and productive way.

Agriculture is totally dependent on water and in turn affects the quality and quantity of water leaving agricultural land. Conservation practices lead to greater water infiltration and less runoff and erosion. Conservation practices hold water in the upland and release it more slowly into the watershed, increasing soil moisture, helping to grow crops and lessening negative downstream effects, such as flooding, sedimentation and the presence of other chemicals in the water.

Much of the 70 million tons of soil eroded from Missouri's land each year enters waterways, clogging



⁴ NRCS, 2002 preliminary unpublished data.

⁵ "T" is usually defined as "the maximum amount of erosion that can be tolerated; below this level of erosion, crop yields can be maintained economically and indefinitely." From W.H. Wischmeir and A.D. Nicks, Predicting rainfall erosion losses. USDA Handbook 537. 1978.

⁶ In the context of this plan, water conservation means conserving the quality and quantity of water that falls as rain or snow upon the land. Water conservation can also result in increased water infiltration into the ground for use by plants, or as recharge water for streams and aquifers (instead of resulting in runoff and erosion).

⁷ Missouri Water Quality Report 2002, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Water Protection Program, http://www.dnr.mo.gov/env/wpp/waterquality/2002_305b.pdf.

⁸ *ibid.*

and filling streams and lakes. The severity of flooding is increased as these silt-laden waterways and reservoirs do not have the capacity to hold as much water as they would without the sediment.



Water conservation and clean water goal:

Maintain, improve and protect the water quality of Missouri's streams and lakes by supporting locally led, watershed-based projects that provide landowners, districts and communities with the information and resources they need.

Water Conservation and Clean Water

Objective 1: Use watershed models to measure the effects of best management practices (BMPs) offered through the Agricultural Nonpoint Source (AgNPS) Special Area Land Treatment (SALT) watershed projects and other watershed programs and cost-share practices.

Water Conservation and Clean Water

Objective 2: Provide local districts with the flexibility they need in selecting watersheds and BMPs to implement the AgNPS SALT Program and other watershed projects. Customize BMPs to accommodate specific resource needs for watersheds across the state.

Water Conservation and Clean Water

Objective 3: Provide education on the use of watershed modeling to assist the local district staff and boards in developing priorities for the limited cost-share and watershed project dollars available.

Water Conservation and Clean Water

Objective 4: Increase the appropriation of AgNPS SALT dollars to allow the commission to fund 15 or more locally led AgNPS SALT projects annually.

Implementation

Implementation of soil and water conservation programs is accomplished through the local districts with the support of Missouri's Soil and Water Districts Commission. Implementing the programmatic goals requires an effective and efficient administrative structure, a sound scientific basis and an educational outreach program to the landowners and the public. The following objectives will support the implementation of the two main program goals, soil and water conservation.

A. Program delivery Support district boards with the tools they need to be responsible, accountable and innovative in the management of the local soil and water conservation districts.

Implementation Objective A1: Assist district boards in their ability to recognize the importance of a commitment to soil and water conservation efforts on a countywide, regional or watershed-basis rather than a farm-by-farm or field-by-field basis. Promote a comprehensive approach to addressing conservation issues.

Implementation Objective A2: Support district boards through training and other opportunities to enhance their knowledge and experience for the responsible administration of the operations of local districts.

Implementation Objective A3: Assist boards in developing their capacity to address the changing needs of their clientele through a broader understanding of the clients' expectations, including attention to changing land uses, technologies and changing demographics. Help districts find new funding sources and assist them with their changing programs and changing clientele.



Implementation Objective A4: Evaluate workload, processes, organization, partners' changing programs and needs, staffing, and compensation of employees of soil and water conservation districts, and make recommendations regarding these issues to improve delivery of services and cost-effectiveness.

B. Education and outreach

Integrate education and outreach activities into the com-



mission's programs and practices. Collaborate closely with other educational partners and across districts to develop resources that support the commission's conservation goals.

Implementation

Objective B1: Develop

and maintain educational offerings that support conservation programs, educate the public about conservation issues and build relationships with other organizations that share the commission's goals.

Implementation Objective B2: Conduct educational and outreach programs to targeted audiences such as county and municipal officials, new and traditional landowners (and operators), schools, business interests, communities and the public.

Implementation Objective B3: Implement educational and outreach programs that support specific conservation practices.

C. Decision making based on sound science

Work in cooperation with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the University of Missouri-Columbia (MU), the Missouri Department of Conservation and others to provide a sound scientific basis for soil and water conservation programs in Missouri.

Implementation Objective C1: Monitoring, estimating and reporting program effectiveness.

Continue working with NRCS, MU and others to develop and use better estimation and reporting tools, especially in relation to water quality benefits expected from conservation practices and the economic benefits of soil and water conservation. Evaluate BMPs for efficacy and for cost-effectiveness. Evaluate processes and procedures for possible improvements, accountability and effectiveness.

Implementation Objective C2: Soil Science and Soil Survey. Collect and interpret data and promote tech-

nical partnerships. The inventory and interpretation of Missouri's soil resource is the scientific basis for soil and water conservation practices and is critical for local conservation planning, watershed projects and a variety of other uses. In cooperation with NRCS, MU and other partners, update and improve Missouri's soil resources database and maps. Assist districts, landowners and others in understanding soils information in relation to their needs and applications. Continue to make soils information available interactively on the Internet and by other means.

Implementation Objective C3: Use accepted technical standards for the installation, maintenance and management of conservation practices and programs.

Implementation Objective C4: Conduct research to help establish new standards, better evaluate program performance, improve soil and water conservation delivery, understand citizen and landowner needs and concerns and improve the scientific foundation of soil and water conservation programs in Missouri.

D. Understanding land use changes

The changes in Missouri's landscape in the past decades have been dramatic and have significant consequences for the stewardship of Missouri's natural resources. The challenges of land-use changes come in a variety of forms. They include the conversion of agricultural land to other uses, subdivision of larger farms into smaller units, consolidation of smaller farms into larger ones, new landowners unaccustomed to rural lifestyles and agricultural production requirements, erosion, stream degradation, and water quality problems resulting from land use changes.

Demographic changes are also occurring, including more people moving into rural areas.⁹ New residents have an effect on natural resources and make demands on local rural infrastructure. Other trends indicate that agricultural land increasingly is owned by absentee landowners who provide little input into how the land is managed.¹⁰ These trends and others will affect soil and water conservation districts and how programs are implemented. These trends need to be carefully monitored to respond to natural resource conservation needs of the future.

⁹ Hobbs, Daryl. 2004. Changing Demographic Patterns in Missouri and Arkansas: 1980-2000. Presentation to Agricultural Lenders School, June 11, Columbia, Mo. Office of Social and Economic Data Analysis, University of Missouri; <http://oseda.missouri.edu/presentations/index.shtml>.

¹⁰ *ibid*

Implementation Objective D1: Examine the trends, issues and implications of changing land use in Missouri, including the long-term sustainability of land-use practices. Work with the University of Missouri, the U.S. Census Bureau, the U.S. and Missouri Departments of Agriculture and other organizations to examine trends, issues and implications of changing land use in Missouri, including the long-term sustainability of the functions of the land, such as its capacity to produce food, clean water and other amenities. Provide this information to districts, landowners and citizens.

Implementation Objective D2: Work with local, state, federal and nonprofit agencies, associations and the public to examine options, for long-term stewardship of Missouri's soil and water resources.

Implementation Objective D3: Assist districts in understanding and responding to changes in their customer base that affect the day-to-day work of the districts. These changes may include, age, background (such as more landowners with urban backgrounds) size of landholdings, ethnicity and others.

E. Fiscal accountability and information management

It is imperative that the commission and districts remain highly accountable for the expenditure of public funds for soil and water conservation activities.

Implementation Objective E1: Maintain and improve policies, internal controls and systems of checks and balances to prevent improper financial activities from occurring. All transactions not in compliance with appropriate standards will be reviewed quickly and resolved.

Implementation Objective E2: Update and improve the information management and reporting systems, as well as district accounting systems, to ensure adequate management reporting and compliance capabilities.

Implementation Objective E3: Periodic audits will be conducted of each soil and water conservation district. All findings will be responded to quickly and responsibly.

Implementation Objective E4: The Office of the Missouri State Auditor office will conduct, at their discretion, periodic audits of the Soil and Water Conservation Program. All findings will be publicized and responded to quickly and responsibly.

F. Organizational capacity building

The commission will encourage the constant improvement in the commission's and the staff's ability to administer and deliver soil and water conservation programs through staff development, improved processes, adoption of appropriate technology and other relevant means.

Implementation Objective F1: Support the commission and staff through recruitment and retention of staff; improve leadership skills; train and provide other opportunities to enhance responsible administration of the organization's programs.

Implementation Objective F2: Support the commission and staff with the tools they need to be responsible and accountable for the management of Missouri's soil and water conservation programs.

Implementation Objective F3: Identify and address barriers that inhibit the organization's ability to achieve goals.

Implementation Objective F4: Develop and maintain strong, mutually beneficial relationships with formal partners and others.

Appendix A: The Planning Process

The Soil and Water Districts Commission (commission) began a comprehensive planning process in 2003 to update its Plan for the Future (plan). The plan was originally adopted in 1994 and has been updated periodically by the commission. The commission has used this document over the past several years to help in its deliberations and decision making. It was also used as a reference during the discussions that led to renewal of the parks-and-soils sales tax in November 1996.

University of Missouri Extension, through its Community Development Program, has provided the commission with extensive assistance with this comprehensive update of the plan. University researchers attended meetings with interested parties to obtain ideas and feedback. They participated in the annual training conferences sponsored by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, the Soil and Water Districts Commission and the Missouri Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (association) and the eight annual area meetings held throughout Missouri. Numerous meetings brought together the commission, Project Steering Committee and others to discuss the issues and receive input. Participants were challenged to look at the issues in the context of a planning horizon of 10 years or more into the future.

Timeline and Summary

The Plan for the Future was developed according to the following timeline.

August 2004, Area meetings. Eight area meetings held around the state provided a forum for developing regional priorities based on local district agendas. About 350 people participated in the sessions. A list of priorities was published reflecting each of the eight areas. The advisory committee then organized and synthesized the material from each of the eight area meetings to reflect the priorities for the state.

November 2004, Annual training conference. A draft of the statewide priorities was shared at the annual training conference of the Soil and Water Districts Commission. Two sessions were held where approximately 60 participants commented on the listed priorities, identifying those items they thought were especially important and adding those that they thought were not adequately represented.

Winter-summer 2005, Developing a plan. The state staff of the Missouri Soil and Water Districts Commission and the advisory group used the statewide priorities to develop a draft Plan for the Future that reflected the priorities of the state. With feedback from the Missouri Soil and Water Districts Commission, revisions were made in June 2005.

August 2005, Area meetings. The 2005 area meetings were used to review and gather feedback on the draft Plan for the Future. Feedback from the eight area meetings was used to refine the draft Plan for the Future.

September 8, 2005, Soil and Water Districts Commission Meeting. The final draft of the Plan for the Future was adopted by the Soil and Water Districts Commission.

Public Input and Comments

The following themes and priorities are based on data collected at the eight area meetings held in August 2004. At each of the meetings, priorities were developed based on what the districts saw as important in that region of the state, but also relevant to the entire state. A series of sessions were held at the annual training conference in November 2004, where a preliminary synthesis of the priorities relevant to the state was presented and reviewed. The following priorities are a result of what was developed at the area meetings and revised at the annual training conference.

General Concerns

Tax renewal

1. Deal with the loss of funding if the tax is not renewed

Meet the needs of the landowners

Farmland preservation

1. Preserve high-production agriculture land
2. Deal with the loss of prime farmland
3. Establish a farmland preservation program

Financial accountability

Get things done

Conserve our natural resources

EDUCATION

Outreach to specific groups, communities and the public (programmatic outreach)

1. Serve minority groups
2. Programs for small landowners, there are more of them and they may require different practices
3. Outreach to youth through programs such as Envirothon
4. Urban landowners and urban outreach—assist with urban conservation and cost-share
5. Information and education to adults and minorities and other alternative groups
6. Educate the community and general public—
increase public awareness, “best kept secret”
 - a. Better quality of information-education provided to the community
 - b. Concern for food and water security
7. Programs that serve all landowners including farmers, nontraditional farmers and nonagriculture landowners
8. Outreach to new landowners and cooperators
 - a. Materials and programs in layman’s terms for newer cooperators
9. Tailor educational programs for a variety of audiences such as rural, urban, elected officials, schools, etc.
10. Adapt programs to changing demographics and landowners
11. More communications, relations with organizations and the community

Developing relationships with government, other organizations, and partners

1. Work more closely with city and county government
 - a. Improve relationships with county government
 - b. Develop contacts within counties to collaborate for orderly development
 - c. Information and education involving county commissioners, municipalities, and planning and zoning commissions

2. Bridge communication issues and develop better cooperation among agencies
 - a. Maintain partnership with conservation agency
3. Educate public about who our partners are (SWCDs, FSA, NRCS, MDC, RC&D)
4. Get to know legislators and their staff and discuss conservation issues with them
 - a. Educate and communicate with legislators on new farm bill

Educational programs supporting specific practices

1. Emphasize our nonstructural practices
2. No-till and other practices
3. Enforcement of guidelines on noxious weed
4. Poultry litter and animal waste
5. Improve water quality through nutrient and pest management planning and education
6. Waste management, including animal waste
7. Storm water management in urban areas
8. Promotion of intensive grazing
9. Grassland management
10. Provide guidance on urban development and land use

New program development including research and planning

1. Maintain an emphasis on agriculture conservation and soil conservation as way to keep the water clean
2. Support broad-based watershed planning
 - a. Increase landowner participation in AgNPS SALT projects
 - b. Stress the benefits of measuring water quality
 - c. Support water quality goals with funding
3. Integrate economics with resource conservation
4. Address intensive use of the land and its impact on the environment
5. Provide landowners with resource management assistance
6. Manage wildlife concerns and issues

Organizational and program maintenance and development

1. Maintain cost-share and increase the dollars
2. Funding and training issues
 - a. Alternative funding opportunities
AgNPS SALT, Section 319, watershed programs
 - b. Share incentive of grant funding for landowners
 - c. Prioritize limited funding
 - d. More education at all levels with funding
3. Use better board participation and increase

information-education funding

- a. Recruit and train supervisors for the future
- b. Provide districts with leadership on resource issues and liability support
- c. Enhance information and education between staff and cooperators. Staff in offices need to educate each other about their programs
- d. Up-to-date on programs and activities
4. More direct contact between the districts and commission so commission can get a true picture of what the districts want
5. Keep up with technology, emphasize computer training, and expand educational programs on present and upcoming technologies such as GPS and infrared
6. Understand changes in ongoing programs
 - a. Change in federal mandate could impact programs for landowners
 - b. Deal with new programs and new laws
7. Maintain status as a technical agency for landowners
 - a. More field days, tours and neighbor-to-neighbor tours
 - b. Adapt to needs and wants of our customers
8. Enhance information and education between staff and cooperators. Staff in offices need to educate each other about their programs

SOIL CONSERVATION

Development of cost-share programs

1. Maintain cost-share and increase the dollars
2. More cost-share practices such as fencing, forestry, wildlife management, and streambank erosion
3. Preserve the diversity of existing cost-share programs on the docket
4. Stretch cost-share dollars with the increased demand
5. Work with contract hog farmers on nutrient and waste management through the regular cost-share
6. Assist urban areas with conservation and cost-share

Create and maintain the structural and nonstructural practices on the ground

1. Maintain and update existing practices
 - a. Pond construction and grazing systems
 - b. Continue funding terraces, waterways and other structures
2. Emphasize our nonstructural practices
3. Grazing land health and address need for more grassland practices

- a. Promote intensive grazing and reduce overgrazing by promoting grassland management
 - b. Grassland lime program
 - c. Fund more workshops for grasslands and with calf operations
- 4. Conservation planning
 - a. Extensive intensive farm plans
 - b. Nutrient and waste management planning and education (human and livestock)
- 5. Pest and nutrient management
 - a. Proper application of nutrients and chemicals without over application
- 6. Continued control of soil erosion and further reduce erosion
- 7. Address aging practices
 - a. Rebuild existing conservation structures
- 8. Effective use of woodlands
- 9. Increased use of no-till
- 10. Programs to address change in practices and farming
- 11. Clover overseeding programs to influence water quality
- 12. Assistance with stream bank erosion
- 13. Learn from completed, successful SALT projects
 - a. Continuing SALT projects

Implementing programs for groups, including technical assistance

- 1. Address interest in wildlife habitat
- 2. More programs for small acreage landowners, they take more time, there are more of them, and they may require different practices
 - a. Small acreage pollution
- 3. New programs for urban counties because they pass the tax
 - a. Assist urban areas with conservation and cost-share

CRP changes

- 1. Expiring CRP contracts and maintenance issues
 - a. Impact in 2007 of the area coming out of CRP
 - b. Incentives to have landowners maintain grassy cover on CRP contracts coming out of CRP
 - c. Develop options for CRP ground

Conservation administration

- 1. Meet "T"
(maximum tolerable amount of erosion)
- 2. Continue to control soil and water quality
 - a. Continue erosion control through improved efficiency of dollars spent

- 3. Continue services for landowners and maintaining staff
 - a. Change thinking in administration of parks-and-soils sales tax to allow hiring of additional employees
 - b. Less stringent rules for farm programs
 - c. Increasing cost of capital for farming — competition for capital between land and practices
- 4. Prioritize limited funds
- 5. Expansion of educational programs on present and upcoming technologies to producers (e.g., GPS, infrared)
- 6. Speed up planning and implementation of corrective measures before problems become uncorrectable

LAND USE CHANGES

Programs for small landowners

- 1. More programs for small area landowners and address nontraditional small farms
- 2. Small acreage pollution

Urbanization including the interface between rural and urban areas

- 1. Address ruralization and urbanization
 - a. Stop urban expansion for farm and habitat protection
 - b. Storm water management in urban areas
 - c. Water quality in relation to urbanization
 - d. Waste management
 - e. Cut back on construction in the flood plain
 - f. New programs for urban counties because they pass the tax
 - g. Guidance for urban development and septic systems
 - h. Assist urban areas with conservation and cost-share
- 2. Cooperative environment between landowners, agencies and urban areas
- 3. Educate urban landowners

Outreach efforts to new customers or landowners — non traditional

- 1. Tailor education for a variety of audiences — rural, urban, elected officials, schools
- 2. Adaptability of programs due to changing demographics and landowners
- 3. More time providing education to a new customer base

Protect and preserve farmland

- 1. Increasing cost of capital for farming — competition for capital between land and

practices

2. Increase funding for farm and ranch protection

Land use changes and development

1. Changing land use from agriculture to other uses
 - a. Change in practices/farming
2. New programs and practices to deal with changing agricultural practices
3. Expiring CRP contracts and maintenance issues
 - a. Understand impacts of CRP lands coming out in 2007
 - b. Options for CRP ground
4. Grazing land health
5. Effective use of woodlands
6. Broad-based watershed planning and implementation
7. Address the intensive use of the land and its impact on the environment
8. Broaden Cost-Share Program to include forestry and wildlife management
9. More interest in wildlife habitat and management
 - a. Handling wildlife concerns and issues

Administrative and organizing issues

1. Improve working relationships with county government
2. Different workload due to changing practices and specialty crops
3. Public demand will change priorities

WATER ISSUES

Research, planning, and measuring outcomes

1. Benefits of measuring water quality
2. Conservation planning
 - a. Extensive intensive farm plans
 - b. Broad-based watershed planning and implementation
 - c. Speed up planning and implementation of corrective measures before problems become uncorrectable
3. Grid testing and pest management
4. Integrate economics with resource conservation and increase cost of capital for farming — competition for capital between land and practices
5. Storm water management in urban areas
 - a. Storm water run-off and control
 - b. Guidance for urban development and septic systems
6. Update water quality goals and practices with funding
7. Address the intensive use of the land and its

impact on the environment

Water programs and practices

1. Emphasize our nonstructural practices
 - a. Maintain and update existing practices
 - b. Pond construction and grazing systems
 - c. Continue funding terraces, waterways, and other structures
2. More water quality practice in regular cost-share
3. Continue SALT projects and manage completed, successful SALT projects
 - a. Waste management and increasing landowner participation in SALT projects
4. Water quality
 - a. Benefits of measuring water quality
 - b. More water quality practice in regular cost-share
 - c. Develop new drinking water resources with an emphasis on quality and quantity
 - d. Update water quality goals and practices with funding
5. Dry hydrants and rural fire protection
6. Concern for food and water security

Cost-share and funding of programs

1. More cost-share practices
 - a. Stretch cost-share dollars with the increased demand
 - b. Keep the diversity of the cost-share practices on the docket
 - c. Prioritize limited funds
 - d. Cost-share to maintain existing septic systems
2. Alternative funding sources

Erosion reduction practices

1. Continued control of soil erosion
 - a. Rebuilding existing conservation structures
 - b. Soil conservation
 - c. Improve grasslands and grazing land health
 - d. More funded workshop for grasslands with calf operations
 - e. Effective use of woodlands
 - f. Streambank erosion cost-share
 - g. Assistance with stream bank erosion
 - h. Increased use of no-till
 - i. Clover overseeding programs to influence water quality
 - j. Protecting and preserving farmland

Improve water quality through pest, nutrient and waste management

1. Work with contract hog farmers on nutrient and waste management through the regular cost-share

2. Proper application of nutrients and chemicals without over application
3. Nutrient and waste management planning and education (human and livestock)
4. Enforcement of guidelines on noxious weeds
5. Proper management of animal waste
 - a. Poultry litter and animal waste

Administering programs

1. Continue services for landowners and maintaining staff
 - a. Additional technical personnel to handle state and federal workload
 - b. Change thinking in administration of parks-and-soils sales tax to allow hiring of additional employees
 - c. Less stringent rules for farm programs
 - d. More funding for qualified staff
 - e. NRCS full-time staff on-site
2. More money for pilot projects to influence water quality

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Working with others

1. Better cooperation among agencies
 - a. Maintain partnership with conservation agency
 - b. More staff support from NRCS
 - c. Keep good working relationships with partners and develop new partnerships
2. Improve relationships with county government
 - a. Develop contacts with county officials for orderly development
3. Tailor education for a variety of audiences—rural, urban, elected officials, schools
4. Get input from others on conservation issues/business, such as board make up, county commissioners and planning and zoning
5. More direct contact between the districts and commission so commission can get a true picture of what the districts want

Staff and district board development and training

1. Maintain informative and qualified board members and staff
 - a. Maintaining, hiring, and training qualified staff
 - a. Proper training for staff—keeping them up-to-date
 - b. Funding and training issues
 - c. More emphasis on computer training and technology
2. Maintain status as a technical agency for landowners

- a. Good technical service
3. Enhance information and education between staff and cooperators
4. Staff in offices needs to educate each other about their programs

Funding for programs

1. Locate and develop funding for continued programs, staff, and equipment
 - a. Increase money for the budget and information-education funding
 - b. Maintain cost-share and increase the dollars
 - c. Increased funding for farm and ranch protection
 - d. More funds for implementing environmental practices
 - e. Law boost share percent
 - f. Increase in district allocation to keep up with workload
2. More funds for administration and conservation from other sources through partners
 - a. Obtain other funding opportunities
AgNPS SALT, Section 319, watershed programs
 - b. Local funding
 - c. Alternative funding sources
3. Incentive of grant funding for landowners
4. More money for pilot projects to influence water center quality
5. Additional technical personnel to handle state and federal workload

Organizational management

1. Balance of service between small, large, absentee farmers
 - a. Understand changes in ongoing programs
 - b. Different workload due to changing practices and specialty crops
 - c. Up-to-date on programs and activities
 - d. NRCS full-time staff on-site
2. Insurance and liability issues such as equipment owned by district and structures and practices
3. Change thinking in administration of parks-and-soils sales tax to allow hiring of additional employees
4. Administration simplification
 - a. Move from paper to electronic
 - b. Changing federal mandate could affect programs for landowners
 - c. Less stringent rules for farm programs
 - d. Prioritize limited funds
 - e. Deal with new programs and new laws
 - f. Speed up planning and implementation of corrective measures before problems become uncorrectable

- g. Reduce paperwork and simplify accountability; changes in program delivery due to political differences
- 5. Keep up with new technology
- 6. New office space
 - a. Construction practices finished on time
 - b. Contractor layout
- 7. Maintain status as a technical agency for landowners
- 8. Staff in offices needs to educate each other about their programs
- 9. Provide districts with leadership on resource issues

Existing resource use

- 1. Continue erosion control through improved efficiency of dollars spent
 - a. Maintain or increase cost-share funding
 - b. Review cost-share programs in precise detail
- 2. Set priorities for available staff
- 3. Look at ways to use district resources in most effective way

Employee retention and recruiting

- 1. More district allocation to retain employees
- 2. Adequate staffing, keeping qualified staff
- 3. Funding for higher salaries for district staff
 - a. Adequate salaries, affordable health insurance, offer family insurance
 - b. Work toward equal pay and benefits for SWCD employees with NRCS

Board development

- 1. Use better board participation
- 2. Recruit and train supervisors for a diverse and active board that is forward looking

Program participation

- 1. Manage absentee landowners
- 2. Increase landowner participation in SALT projects
- 3. Continue services for landowners
 - a. Maintain high levels of participation of cooperators
 - b. Continue to make producers the first priority
 - c. Customer-driven service
 - d. Providing landowners with resource management assistance
 - e. Adapt to needs and wants of our customers
 - f. Enhance information and education between staff and cooperators



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